

THE JESUITS

By **PAUL HOFMANN** FEB. 14, 1982

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At the Villa Cavalletti in Frascati, workmen are busily adapting the 18th-century pseudo-Renaissance mansion and adjoining buildings that normally serve as a spiritual retreat center into the setting for an extraordinary assembly of provincial superiors of the Society of Jesus. The regional heads have been summoned to the villa outside Rome not, as would have been customary, by their Superior General but by order of Pope John Paul II. As the heads of the Jesuit infrastructure from all over the world prepare for the meeting, which begins on Feb. 23 and will last at least a week, thousands of others within the order anxiously speculate about what lies ahead for the largest, most prestigious and often most controversial organization of priests and brothers in the Roman Catholic Church.

All are aware of the Pontiff's dissatisfaction with the direction many Jesuits have taken in recent years and of his determination to bring wavering members in line with his conservative leadership. How they respond to the explicit directives the Pope will relay through his personal representative at the Frascati meeting will have a profound effect on the future of the order, whose members have for centuries enjoyed positions of exceptional power within the church. That the meeting will take place at a time when many Jesuits believe their influence is being threatened in certain areas by the Sacerdotal Society of the Holy Cross adds to the anxiety. This group - more commonly known as Opus Dei (God's Work) - is a fast-growing, highly conservative international lay organization known to have found special favor with the Pope. But the immediate disquiet stems most directly from an event that took place one day last October.

None of the passers-by in St. Peter's Square that autumn day could have guessed that a drama of historic significance was about to be enacted when a slender churchman emerged from the Vatican's Bronze Doors and walked a few hundred yards to a cluttered complex of buildings on the Borgo Santo Spirito near the Tiber embankment.

The ecclesiastic was Agostino Cardinal Casaroli, Secretary of State to Pope John Paul II. The prelate was calling at the world headquarters of the Jesuits to deliver a letter from the Pontiff addressed to the Very Rev. Pedro de Arrupe y Gondra, the order's ailing 74-year-old Superior General, the second most powerful figure in Roman Catholicism, "the black pope," who in the simple black cassock of his order commands battalions of Jesuits, always in service to the man in white, the Pope.

In his letter, John Paul II notified the order that he had appointed what in another ideological system would be called a commissar, with full powers to direct the Jesuits. In effect, the Pope was displacing Father Arrupe as operating head of the order. The decision, which was without precedent in the 442-year history of the elite order, reflected the Pope's well-known concern over liberal and left-wing currents among the 26,622 Jesuits, the greatest number - 5,757 - of whom are in the United States. (See box on page 29 for details on Jesuits in the United States.)

John Paul II's move was all the more startling since the Society of Jesus is pledged to particular fealty toward the Pontiff - almost two-thirds of its members, those eligible for high office within the order, have taken a solemn vow of special obedience to the head of their church. The present Pope's concerns echo those of Pope Paul VI, who in 1973 directed Father Arrupe to "express our desire, indeed our demand, that the Jesuits remain loyal to the Papacy."

A demand from a reigning pontiff that the Jesuits express continuing fealty to the Vatican carries a special note of irony, because the order was founded four centuries ago for the express purpose of defending the Roman Catholic Church against the forces of the Reformation initiated by Martin Luther and continued by subsequent Protestant leaders. Since its founding in 1540 by a Spanish nobleman and former soldier, St. Ignatius of Loyola, the Society of Jesus has appeared to the world as an awesomely disciplined formation that invited military metaphors like "the company," "the Pope's vanguard" and "the long black line," completely obedient to the Papacy and to its own leaders, *perinde ac cadaver* (roughly, to have no more will than a corpse). Yet the order

always seemed highly adaptable and gained a reputation for resourcefulness. Over the centuries, Jesuits have been confessors and confidants of European kings, proselytizers among Indian tribes in the Americas, builders of triumphant cathedrals throughout the Western Hemisphere, respected scholars at the courts of Oriental emperors and proteges of Catherine the Great of Russia.

The dictionary defines "Jesuit" as a member of a religious order for men, but also, in a lingering second meaning that reflects the original derogatory use of the term by the society's enemies, as "a crafty schemer, cunning dissembler." Today the order does not appear to outsiders like a phalanx of militant defenders of the faith or international intriguers, but rather like a network of diverse groups, yet still managing to operate with a certain sense of esprit de corps. Primed in the past to halt deviations from the faith, the Jesuits over the past two decades have increasingly found themselves accused of espousing views unacceptable to conservative Roman Catholics.

It was the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) that unleashed liberal forces among the Jesuits, as it did in other church groups and among Roman Catholics in general. Many Jesuits were deeply involved in the preparations for the Council from the moment it was conceived by Pope John XXIII, who relied heavily on the order for counsel. The Jesuits' advanced scholarship was called on often before and during the Council. Pope John XXIII was particularly impressed by Augustin Bea, the brilliant German Jesuit, who championed Christian-Jewish dialogue. He made him a cardinal, in charge of the crucial Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, which became a rallying point for liberals and ecumenicists at the Council.

Throughout Vatican II, such prominent Jesuits as John Courtney Murray, Henri de Lubac and Gustave Weigel served as advisers and had much influence as liberal lobbyists. One of the aftereffects of the Council was the encouragement of experimentation with new forms of liturgy, in which the Jesuits played a large role.

The intellectual ferment that came into the open at Vatican II has continued longer within the order than in other church structures. Jesuits, especially in the United States and the Netherlands, have caused dismay in the Vatican by questioning papal pronouncements on birth control, priestly celibacy, the barring of women from the priesthood and other issues. Other church worries stem from the sympathies of some Jesuits for guerrilla tactics in left-wing and pacifist causes. Jesuits are reportedly active in revolutionary movements in Guatemala and El Salvador. In Nicaragua, they played a role in the Sandinist revolution. In the Philippines, the Rev. Jose Blanco recently was accused of plotting to destabilize the regime of President Ferdinand E. Marcos.

In the last 50 years, Jesuit personalities and pursuits have ranged from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the French thinker who sought to conciliate evolutionism with Christian revelation, to the Rev. Robert Drinan, president of Americans for Democratic Action, who as a member of the United States Congress opposed the Vietnam War and urged President Nixon's impeachment, and who later obeyed Pope John Paul II's blanket order that priests must not hold elective political office.

Many other Jesuits continue their order's centuries-old tradition as educators and molders of theological and secular opinion. Some are archeologists, or astronomers who exchange information with

Soviet colleagues, or biblical scholars attending Jerusalem's Hebrew University, or famous theologians, like the Rev. Karl Rahner of West Germany, who in 1980 declared: "We have an obligation to stand in peace with the Pope, but not everything we do needs positive approbation from him."

Still others operate Vatican Radio, which broadcasts religious news in 35 languages around the globe and also offers programs of sacred and classical music, folk tunes and jazz. As far as the contents of broadcasts are concerned, the Jesuits operating the station are under the general supervision of the Vatican's Secretariat of State, which is believed to monitor programs very carefully these days. Typical of the present climate in ecclesiastical Rome are recurrent rumors that Opus Dei, as part of an intricate power play, may take over management of the facility from the Jesuits. A member of Opus Dei, while saying that there is no plan now to entrust the radio station to his organization, nevertheless adds: "Of course, we could handle it, if we were asked to do it."

Talk about a removal at this stage, however, appears to be just that - talk. "But even as malevolent gossip, it is a little scary to the Jesuit order right now," says a well-connected churchman who, like many in and out of the order, is reluctant to be identified. "It may be part of a war of nerves against the company," he suggests. Or it may be that the rumors began because Opus Dei is reputedly very wealthy and Vatican budget administrators are known to be interested in having someone else take on the \$3 million annual cost of running the station.

Other Jesuits are theoreticians, or even practitioners, of the "theology of liberation" - that is, the rereading of the Gospels from a

Marxist angle. In one of his rare public statements, Father Arrupe told Italian journalists in 1979 that although "we cannot accept the commitment of (pro-Marxist) Jesuits ... this should not prevent us from taking a deep interest in Marxism. ... Many views of the Marxists are mistaken and dangerous, but it is no less true that they are often inspired by a profound sense of the injustices they want to combat."

Yet, many members of the order cling to the old ways. They lament the weakening cohesion in their ranks and are scandalized by Jesuits in blue jeans who have abandoned their conventlike residences to live in small urban communes or, worst of all, who have left the order entirely.

Such ferment and fracturing within the Society of Jesus suggests to conservative Roman Catholics the disarray in an army whose assault forces suffer sagging morale, factionalism and desertions. Painful choices are looming. There is talk in Rome that those Jesuits who feel they are unable to keep the special oath of obedience to the Pope may soon find it easier to be released from their vows. A hint at such a possibility, tantamount to a major purge, may be given at the meeting in Frascati.

"If one-half of all Jesuits might have to leave the order," confided a high churchman who is expected soon to become a cardinal, "it would be better than the present confusion and distrust. The Holy Father has made clear who is the boss; he is the boss also of the Jesuits."

During much of its history, the Society of Jesus's relationship with the Papacy has not been markedly different from that of other orders. If it seemed to enjoy greater latitude in its activities, this was

usually a result of its own enterprise rather than because of any special license from the Vatican. Earlier popes had also cracked down on Jesuit initiatives. Perhaps the most famous instance is the so-called "rites controversy" involving the toleration of some Confucian ceremonies by Jesuit missionaries in China. After considerable wrangling, involving other religious orders, Pope Clement XI in 1704 finally banned the Jesuit-approved rites of Chinese ancestor worship among Chinese converts to Roman Catholicism.

More recently, Father Jose Maria Diez-Alegria, once a member of the faculty at the prestigious Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, irritated Pope Paul VI by his book - published in 1972 without authorization from his order's superior - "I Believe in Hope," which displayed left-wing sympathies and criticized the Vatican's wealth. The Rev. Peter Hebblethwaite, formerly editor of the British Jesuit magazine, *The Month*, scathingly criticized an aide to Pope Paul VI and the Roman Curia in general in a secular newspaper, *The Observer*. Father Arrupe personally apologized to the Vatican for the actions of Father Hebblethwaite, who eventually left the order.

During the last decade, papal admonitions have been repeatedly addressed to the company. In 1974, Pope Paul VI wrote that in some Jesuit branches he had noted "certain tendencies of an intellectual and disciplinary nature that, if encouraged, would introduce very serious and perhaps incurable changes in your essential structures."

Paul VI's successor, Pope John Paul I, was preparing another pontifical reproof when he died within weeks after election. According to the prepared text, released after his death, John Paul I

planned to put the order on guard against "secularizing influences" - worldliness -in its units.

And in 1979, Pope John Paul II moved quickly to establish a firm conservative mood in the Vatican that many liberal Roman Catholics, both clergy and laity, felt was directed at halting, and even rolling back, many of the reforms and experiments set in motion by Vatican II. The Pope sternly told a gathering of high-ranking Jesuits that a religious crisis in the contemporary world was also affecting the Society of Jesus, ' 'causing confusion among the Christian people and anxieties to the church."

Each Jesuit community subsequently received a picture of the Superior General kneeling before the Pope. Father Arrupe urged every Jesuit to engage in self-criticism and help bring about the "necessary changes ." But though he conceded "the difficulty of new, ambiguous, conflictual situations," he nevertheless asked all Jesuit communities to report to him in writing any member of the order leading a less-than-austere life, being slack in his religious duties, seeking independence of his superiors , maintaining "relations full of ambiguity with other persons," or erring otherwise in the observance of his vows.

Despite his recent pronouncements and actions, Pope John Paul II is said not to have any personal animosity toward the order as a whole. His displeasure, according to church sources, is aimed only at liberal Jesuits, as it is at all liberal Catholics, both lay and religious. And they point to John Paul II's excellent relations with middle-of-the-road and conservative Jesuits.

The Pope's intervention in the running of the Jesuit order did not sit well with many of its members. In West Germany, 18 Jesuits,

including Father Rahner, declared in a letter addressed to the Pope - later unofficially disclosed - that they could not recognize "the finger of God in this administrative measure" of suspending their order's constitution.

Liberal Jesuits throughout the world were outraged by the Pope's treatment of their ailing leader, who had earlier announced his intention to prepare to step down, although all his predecessors had remained in the post until their deaths.

After he was stricken last August with a brain hemorrhage that left him temporarily unable to speak and paralyzed his right side, Father Arrupe had indicated that one of his four general assistants, an American, the Rev. Vincent T. O'Keefe, should serve as Vicar General, or interim head of the order. Many Jesuits had thought that the genial 62-year-old Father O'Keefe, a former president of Fordham University and a sometime religious-affairs commentator on American network television, might some day succeed Father Arrupe.

The newly appointed Personal Delegate of the Holy Father for the Society of Jesus, who has been given full powers to fulfill the duties of the Superior General, is the Rev. Paolo Dezza, an 80-yearold, partially blind Italian scholar. A former rector of the Gregorian University, an important position held by Jesuits in Rome, he had been father confessor to Popes Paul VI and John Paul I. The Rev. Giuseppe Pittau, a 53-year-old Italian and a friend of Pope John Paul II who has been Jesuit provincial superior in Japan for the past 17 years, was named Father Dezza's deputy. Father O'Keefe remains in Rome as an adviser to the new team.

The appointment of Father Dezza was perceived by many Jesuits to be a stinging rejection of Father O'Keefe by the Pope, who is thought to be too media-conscious by the Pontiff. Father Dezza more directly epitomizes the traditional Vatican Jesuit, very much at home in the Curia, the church's central administrative machinery. The Pope's letter indicated, however, that Father Dezza would not be the next Superior General, but it did stipulate that should he die before the order elects a new leader, Father Pittau would replace him as Vicar General.

In an interview published last month in *Famiglia Cristiana*, an Italian church weekly, Father Dezza stated that he had been directed by the Pope "not to convene a General Congregation for the time being, but to promote more careful preparation according to the directives from the Holy Father." This is widely understood to mean that the Vatican wants first to vet the electors of the next Superior General and to sift likely candidates for this crucial job.

The government of the Society of Jesus is monarchical and highly centralized, with the Superior General as the key figure. Its only legislative body is the General Congregation, which has met only 32 times in more than 400 years. In addition to four general assistants, the Superior General's immediate staff includes 12 regional assistants. Each Jesuit region, or assistancy, is split into provinces, whose heads are also named by the Superior General, as are the local superiors for each Jesuit house or community.

Like all other orders, the Jesuits report continually to the Vatican - directly to the Pope via the Superior General or to the Pope's Secretariat of State on important matters; on routine business, to the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Religious and

the Secular Institutes, the Curia department dealing with religious orders.

When the provincial superiors gather at Frascati a week from next Tuesday, Father Dezza will, after mass and prayers said in common, "clearly present" the Pope's thoughts about the present state of the order and tell the Jesuits what the Pontiff wants them to do about it.

Officials at Jesuit headquarters in Rome refuse to anticipate what will happen at Frascati, except to say that there will be thorough discussion of the papal directives and that no decisions will be made. The heads of one or more of the 10 provinces in the United States and some of those from Central and South America are expected to speak on behalf of the order's liberal wing, asking for understanding of their ways in a multi-ethnic, multicultural society, but they are not expected to force an open rupture of any kind. A Basque, as was St. Ignatius, Father Arrupe is an uncommon churchman with uncommon achievements and experiences. His 27 years in Japan earned him the name of "the Shinto Jesuit." When American planes dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, he was at the order's novitiate at Nagatsuka on the outskirts of the devastated city. He and his fellow Jesuits are credited with saving many lives by treating survivors of the blast at their institution, which was also damaged.

By the time he was elected head of the Jesuits in 1965, the sharpfeatured Father Arrupe had earned a reputation for being something of a liberal. As Superior General, he repeatedly called on the company to step up its work among the poor and underprivileged and to phase out activities that seemed to identify it with the well-to-

do. He wanted his order's educators to go into the ghettos to teach the disadvantaged. In India, now the order's second strongest assistancy, Jesuit institutions have moved from the cool, isolated places in the hills to the teeming and impoverished areas of New Delhi and Madras.

As Father Arrupe exhorted his order to strengthen its social commitment worldwide, he himself became the target of criticism from conservatives within the church who charged him with permissiveness and with a lack of administrative efficiency. His predecessor, the Very Rev. Jean B. Janssens, a Flemish Belgian who headed the order from 1946 to 1964, had seldom left his headquarters in Rome. Father Arrupe visited almost every country in the world, including the United States - the first time a Jesuit leader had done so - to maintain personal contact with members of the company in the field. Many with whom he talked wanted to be released from their vows, and his response was often sympathetic. He also showed understanding for the Rev. Daniel Berrigan by visiting the antiwar Jesuit in the Federal prison in which he was serving his sentence for participating in the destruction of draft-board records.

Whether authorized to do so or not, hundreds of Jesuits have been abandoning the order every year. From a peak of 36,000 in 1965, the society's strength has declined to 26,000, close to 20,000 of whom are priests, the rest being "scholastics" (Jesuits in training) and brothers. Despite defections, about one out of every 20 Roman Catholic priests, not all of whom belong to orders, is a Jesuit.

Jesuits who have dropped out sometimes manage to stay in fields they pursued while in the order. In the Netherlands, with the

support of liberal bishops, some educators taught for a while on seminary faculties until the Vatican called a halt to the practice. Other dropouts have become marriage counselors, welfare workers, authors and publishing assistants.

For some years, the number of new society members had been falling off sharply, especially in Europe, but Jesuit headquarters now reports an influx of novices - 1,000 at present - particularly in Latin America and India, but also in the United States.

Why do young men who feel a vocation for the priesthood enter a Jesuit novitiate? "Individual motivations vary," a senior member of the order says. "Some novices view the company as the best framework for their scholarly interests; others are attracted by its worldwide scope."

A candidate for the order spends two years as a novice, taking his first vows of poverty, chastity and obedience at the end of this period. After ordination to the priesthood, Jesuits do postgraduate work in philosophy and theology and are encouraged to engage in specialized studies. When this training has been completed, a Jesuit reconfirms his earlier three vows and is considered a "spiritual coadjutor."

Members of the order who are admitted - after at least 10 years, sometimes as many as 17 - to the top class of "professed" Jesuits take again the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and a fourth solemn vow of obedience to the Pope which other Jesuits do not take. The solemnity of this final vow makes it very difficult to obtain release.

Younger Jesuits, long critical of the two-tier system, suggested several years ago that everyone in the order be allowed to take the

fourth oath and thus become eligible for leadership positions. But in 1975 Pope Paul VI forbade such a change, apparently fearful that liberal currents within the order would gain further ground.

Despite all the dissatisfaction and turmoil, the order is still well represented, with hundreds of members in key positions in the ecclesiastical establishment in Rome. At present, three Jesuits - an Ecuadorean, an Indian and a Malagasy - are included in the 124-member College of Cardinals, with one more to come after the expected elevation so on of Archbishop Carlo Martini, a former rector of the Gregorian University. (Canon law does not call for any quota system for cardinals, but traditionally, one red hat has always been reserved for a Jesuit.)

And Strasbourg, France, a city that is host to the European Parliament and a site of ecumenical contacts between Roman Catholics and Protestants, now has as its bishop a former Jesuit, Roger Heckel. (After elevation to all ranks above bishop, priests, officially, if not always emotionally, separate themselves from their orders.)

Jesuits also publish the authoritative semimonthly magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica* (whose galley proofs are routinely submitted to the Vatican's Secretary of State). They also operate 92 universities and colleges, 70 high schools and 70 theological centers for men going on to the priesthood, and administer the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome.

Members of the company say privately that the present Pontiff's reassertion of supreme authority over the Society of Jesus recalls the disbandment of the order by Pope Clement XIV in 1773, on the

ground that the peace of Christendom demanded it since Jesuits had caused much dissension by meddling in affairs of the secular powers.

For 41 years, the order survived openly in parts of the Russian Empire, where the papal ban was ignored, and under disguise in scattered communities elsewhere. When Pope Pius VII restored the order in 1814, there were, therefore, enough trained Jesuits for a new corporate start.

Before and after the papal suppression, the order was expelled from a number of countries. It has faced such formidable adversaries as Bismarck, who drove it out of his new German Reich. In Switzerland, a century-old constitutional prohibition of Jesuit activities within the confederation was repealed only in 1973.

Although the resilient Jesuits have made many comebacks, they have never forgotten the dire times 209 years ago when a pontiff left them naked to their enemies. To this day, few members of the order ever enter the Church of the Most Holy Apostles, which contains a monument to Pope Clement XIV.

Nobody in Rome even remotely thinks that John Paul II might follow the example of Clement XIV and suppress the company. But the fact that some Jesuits cite the historical precedent at all betrays their bitterness.

The present predicament of the company is deepened by Pope John Paul II's interest in Opus Dei, founded in 1928 by Father Jose Maria Escriva de Balaguer, a young priest from Madrid, who was apparently motivated by a need to counteract anticlerical trends in Spanish society.

One of the reasons for the thinly disguised enmity between Jesuits and Opus Dei members is intellectual: Prominent Jesuits are

now in the avant-garde of Roman Catholic thinking, whereas Opus Dei represents bedrock orthodoxy. In private, the two groups frequently offer trenchant judgments about each other's activities and conduct. Their publicly muted antagonism stems in part from the specific conditions in Spain during the 1950's and 60's, when several members of Opus Dei played prominent roles in the regime of Generalissimo Francisco Franco, which the Jesuits opposed. By 1957, four members of the Spanish Cabinet were either members of, or very closely allied with, Opus Dei; in 1969, they numbered 10 out of 19.

While there has never been any suggestion that Franco himself was an Opus Dei member, his wife, Carmen, was said to sympathize with the movement. Stories that Juan Carlos as heir-designate to Franco had an Opus Dei confessor and now as King of Spain is still surrounded by members of that organization have been current for some time in rumor-happy Madrid, but these reports cannot be substantiated.

One of the areas where Opus Dei has encroached on the traditional turf of the Jesuits is in establishing educational and social centers in various countries, including a university in Pamplona, Spain, and vocational schools and international students' residences, including six in the United States.

It would appear that Opus Dei is filling a vacuum in the church because lay forces that flourished in the past have lately dried up. This is particularly true of Catholic Action, a formerly militant lay organization now only a shadow movement in many countries. Some new Roman Catholic youth and lay movements, like Focolare, Community and Liberation, are said to be friendly toward Opus Dei.

Thus, a Roman Catholic fundamentalist lay front may be coalescing, one evidently welcomed by the Pope.

Many of the ominous things said in the past about the Jesuits are now being said about Opus Dei. It is called a "church within the church," "the holy mafia," or "Octopus Dei" -labels suggesting intrigue, infiltration and plots.

But Opus Dei describes itself simply as an international association of Roman Catholics committed to practicing the Christian virtues in both private and professional life. While it has taken over some features of monastic discipline, it disclaims it is an order, although diocesan priests account for about 3 percent of its membership, and several influential cardinals are known to be supporters, though not members.

The movement stresses full acceptance of church dogma and traditional forms of worship. Like other religious groups, it encourages the "discipline of mortification." The Times of London in a controversial article last year on alleged Opus Dei practices in England - based on material supplied by a former Opus Dei member, Dr. John Roche of Oxford University - published pictures purporting to show "instruments of mortification" said to be used by some members. While Opus Dei denied many of the charges in the article, it did not deny the practice of self-inflicted pain as a way of mortification.

Although Opus Dei sometimes claims that it is a "disorganized organization," informants, including expelled members, say that it is rigidly structured with places at the top reserved for intellectuals having university doctorate degrees and the lowest rung for blue-collar workers and peasants who, by giving the association numerical

strength, help refute troublesome allegations of elitism. A 36,000-member women's branch, set up in 1930, operates on a separate-but-equal basis from the male branch.

Overseeing the operation of the organization at Opus Dei headquarters in Rome is a General Council comprising appointed delegates from various world regions. Total membership is currently 72,000, representing 80 different nationalities, some of them migrants or exiles. The organization's 4,000 members in the United States are represented in Rome by David Sperling and Daryl Glick, who constantly shuttle between Rome and their organization's headquarters in New Rochelle, N.Y.

Some lay members live in Opus Dei residences, others at home with their families. The vast majority of members work, and often excel, in a wide variety of civilian professions and businesses. Some of the substantial monetary contributions to the movement are said to come from non-Catholic "cooperators," or sympathizers.

A steady trickle of devotees is attracted to the marble tomb - in the chapel of Opus Dei headquarters on the Viale Bruno Buozzi in Rome - of the order's founder, who died in 1975. Formal proceedings, backed by 1,300 bishops, to have Monsignor Escriva proclaimed "blessed" - a step on the road to sainthood - were opened last year.

A photograph in the office of the present head of Opus Dei, the Very Rev. Alvaro del Portillo y Diez de Sollano, shows him with Pope John Paul II, who has inscribed it in his own hand: "With the most affectionate apostolic blessing." In Rome's clerical society, where every word of the Pontiff is carefully weighed, the adjective *affezionatissima* in the Italian text is interpreted as a sign of particular favor.

John Paul II first came to know of Opus Dei during his many trips to Rome and to other parts of the world when he was still Archbishop of Cracow. He probably was attracted by the association's orthodoxy and its ways of getting things done. Since becoming Pope, he has told the association's leaders that he would like Opus Dei -which has so far kept out of Communist-governed countries - to become active in his homeland, Poland.

Whatever larger role the Vatican might be considering for Opus Dei, the immediate task of the Vatican is to re-establish its authority over the Society of Jesus by tightening control over its members. Just how far the Pope is prepared to go to enforce his will was evident last New Year's Eve.

Soon after he was elevated to the Papacy, John Paul II revived the ancient tradition of a papal year-end Te Deum in the world's principal Jesuit church. Before the service last year at the Church of the Gesu, in Rome which holds the tomb of St. Ignatius, he let it be known, pointedly, that he did not want to see any Jesuits in civilian clothes at the ceremony. Nor did he.

After the service, the Pope went on to the Jesuit general house to affectionately greet Father Arrupe, by then able to talk and get around a bit. Then the Pontiff shared dinner in the order's refectory with Fathers Dezza and Pittau and the members of the headquarters staff.

"The Holy Father was very kind, but also very guarded, in his remarks," a Jesuit who was present said afterward. "He gave us no hint about the future of the company."

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Paul Hofmann, a former correspondent for The New York Times and author of "Rome: The Sweet Tempestuous Life," is working on a book about the Vatican.

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